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man would deliberately cherish. They may have sprung up in dark ages, and have struck their roots so deeply and extensively in the minds of the lower orders, that they may now continue to flourish of themselves, without any deliberate culture. Yet when their nature is distinctly understood, it becomes a question whether they ought to be left to such spontaneous growth, or whether the enlightened and philanthropic classes ought not to unite for the purpose of positively discouraging them. The subject merits the particular attention of the ministers of religion of all denominations; who may do much in convincing the more ignorant in their flocks, of the impropriety as well as folly of such practices.

We insert the following description, by an eye-witness, of a well known scene in this neighbourhood; as interesting both on account of the picturesque objects which it presents, and the useful reflections to which it may give rise.

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STRUILE, AT MIDSUMMER.

"Ergo exercentur pœnis, veterumque malorum  
Supplicia expiunt,  
Donec longa dies, perfecto temporis orbe,  
Concretam exemit labem."

Of all the benefactors of mankind, to whom the latest posterity ought to look with the liveliest gratitude, none is more generally and justly celebrated than the patron saint of the Shamrock Isle. He has left innumerable memorials of himself in various parts of Ireland; but, as might have been expected, in none more abundantly than in the neighbourhood of his own favourite town, where his body is deposited, Down Patrick,—the Dun, or the Town of St. Patrick. To those who are skilled in legendary lore, indeed, that neighbourhood is completely classical. Every spot has been the scene of some far famed event in his wondrous life, or enjoys to this day the benediction of the saint.

I had an opportunity of being fully convinced of this, by a visit which I paid to Downpatrick, at the season of the summer solstice in 1822.—I was surprised to see, for many successive days, vast crowds of strangers moving through the streets. This concourse, I found, consisted of penitents from all parts of Ireland, whose object was to wash off their pollutions and impurities, by a pilgrimage to the mountain of penance, and the holy wells of Struile. I was induced to join the crowds in visiting the sacred place, that I

might learn the nature of the ceremonies which produced such important effects.

Struile mountain, or rather hill, stands about an Irish mile eastward of Downpatrick, and nearly half a mile south of Sliab-na-grídean, one of the most celebrated of the ancient Pagan high places. The hill has about 150 feet of perpendicular elevation. It is composed, I believe, of granite, over which is a thin covering of slate stone, and a still thinner coating of soil. It remains uncultivated, and unprofaned by the hand of man; and produces, like most of our neglected hills, a little mixture of grass and shamrock, with an abundant crop of furze, and a few hawthorns. To the pasture no peculiar sanctity belongs; but such is the spell that binds the hawthorn leaves, that all the art of man cannot contrive to strike off exactly three of them together. It would, of course, be improper to bring this matter to the simple test of experience. The fact has been always credited, and handed down from father to son, as authentic tradition; and since no time can be shown between the fifth and sixteenth centuries, when its truth was ever questioned, it would be presumptuous now to entertain the slightest doubt.

Below the hill, to the southward, is a plain, which possesses also a peculiar sanctity, to the extent of perhaps two acres. At the eastern extremity of this plain, stand the walls of a chapel originally built by St. Patrick, and rebuilt about the end of last century, but from want of money or encouragement, it has never been roofed, or even consecrated. It is, therefore, neither used for worship, nor regarded as more sacred than the adjoining ground.—Through the middle of the field runs a small but never-failing stream, which rises at the distance of a mile and a half, near the country seat of Dr. Macoulroy. A mill belonging to this gentleman, and turned by the sacred stream, has been built upon the ruins of the celebrated monastery established here by St. Patrick and St. Bridgid. Near this mill, and probably supplied by the same springs, is a well called also by the name of the Saint. Nor, indeed, can there be a doubt that it was really his: for a large loose stone beside it, bears the mark of his holy foot. So carefully too is this stone preserved, both by the evil spirits and the good spirits, who are equally guardians of the place, that should any individual remove it, it would be found on the following morning restored by the angels of light to its pristine situation; while the unfortunate individual who had the audacity to interfere with the hallowed relic, would suffer unspeakable torments from the powers of darkness, in the course of the intervening night. The water thus sanctified,

runs unpolluted by any other stream, until it reaches Struile. It then flows through the sacred plain, by a channel covered over with flags and large stones, and supplies in its course four distinct wells. The first two wells that are in a higher situation, appear to have been formed by hollowing out a little ground near the course of the rivulet; while it enters the other two by spouts, from which the water falls about three and six feet. The first two wells have coverings over them, in the form of sentry boxes; the covering of the third is of the size and form of a moderate pigstye; and that of the fourth is a kind of little cottage, consisting of two apartments.

To this place about one thousand people resort every midsummer, for the purpose of doing penance. They come from all parts of Ireland, and sometimes even from France and Spain. Besides these, there is always a large crowd of spectators, amounting probably to another thousand. For the comfort and accommodation of both, a number of tents is erected in the plain, where whiskey is sold, and entertainment of every kind is afforded. The ceremonies commence upon the Sunday preceding, and commonly end upon the Sunday succeeding midsummer day. As it is not necessary, however, that each penitent should continue here during all this period, few remain longer than one-half of the week. The latter half seems to be regarded as the more holy; for the place is, during that time, more frequented, particularly upon the last day, which is for that reason called "big Sunday."

No one appears to act as a general superintendant, but the multitudes seem to be left to themselves in submitting to the penance, and performing the ceremonies with which it is connected. As far as I could ascertain, from observing a few individuals whom I singled out, the following is the outline of the process through which they pass.

In what way an individual ascertains the amount of his guilt, or the quantity of penance requisite for its removal, the spectator cannot determine. It is understood, however, that he may either submit to the process of purification himself, or hire another to pass through it in his stead: but there is no apparent distinction upon the spot, between the principals and the substitutes. In all cases, too, the distance of the place of residence from Struile is taken into account; and when it is considerable, the journey which the individual has performed is reckoned as a part of the penance.

The penitents all proceed in the first instance to Downpatrick, where each procures a portion of holy soil from the grave of the patron Saint. This grave lies between those of

Bridgid and Columella,\* in the ancient burying ground of Saint Patrick's Cathedral. It is impossible to question the superior sanctity of this ground, or even to doubt that the apostle of Ireland is buried here. For, besides the indubitable tradition which ascertains it, viz:

"Tria sancta virorum corpora tumulantur in Duno,  
Patricius, Bridgida, atque Columba pius,"—†

I have been assured of the fact by a very worthy person, who proved it in the following most convincing manner. "The bones of the Saint were wearied, and his manes grievously harrassed, by the want of faith that prevailed even in Ireland, in the 16th century. To put an end, therefore, to all manner of doubt upon the subject, he stretched forth his fleshless arm, and with the most condescending good nature, was pleased to allow it to be cut off by the elbow. Consequently this, and no other is the place where the Saint is buried.—But when I continued doubtful, and asked how he knew the arm to be that of Saint Patrick?" "Oh!" replied he, "it was from *his* identical grave that the arm was stretched forth!" The grave is distinguished from all the surrounding burying ground, by its never giving birth to a single weed, nor to any other herbs than grass and shamrock. From this place, then, having got a handful of sacred earth, they proceeded to some house in town where masses are said during this week, every day, from morning till night: and after a short delay, set off for Struile.

On first entering the valley of Struile, the endless swarms of those arriving, of those departing, and of those engaged in the ceremonies, all of whom are incessantly occupied in repeating rosaries, ave-marias, and invocations to the various Saints, strongly remind one of Homer's simile of the Bees;

As from the hollow rock bees stream abroad,  
And in succession endless seek the fields,  
Now clustering, and now scattered far and near,  
In Spring-time, among all the new-blown flowers;  
So they, a various throng—  
O'er the green level moved.

Sometimes, when overcome by fatigue, they pause for a few minutes from their penance; and, during this interval, have no objection to converse with the bystanders. A poor woman happened to stop beside me, and perceiving that I was eyeing her with a look of pity; "I suppose, Sir," said she, "you would not undergo this for the kingdom of heaven's sake." On my telling her that I would most readily submit to it, if I were convinced that it would insure to me such a happy re-

\* Columella, commonly called Collumbkill, from a word denoting a little dove.

† The bodies of three Saints are buried in Down: Patrick, Bridgid, and Columba the pious.

sult: she very kindly exclaimed "God be praised, there are yet hopes of you!"

The penance begins at the foot of the hill, which they climb upon their bare and bleeding knees, by a steep and stony narrow path, originally intended as an emblem of the way that leadeth to eternal life. A few, whose sins are of a milder cast, may run up this path barefoot; but those who have been guilty of black and grievous offences, besides crawling upon their knees, must carry a large rough stone, with their hands placed upon the back of their neck. When they reach the top of the hill, they run down at a quick trot by the other side, and returning to the narrow path, ascend as before. This they repeat 3, 7, 9, 12 times, or multiples of these numbers, according to the nature of their transgressions. The more respectable among them keep their reckoning by beads; while the poorer sort lift a pebble to mark each ascent. After having thus completed their rounds, they are next turned in what is called Saint Patrick's chair. This is a kind of chair formed of four rocks, so placed, apparently by nature, that three of them serve as a back and sides, and the remaining one as a bottom to the seat. It stands about the middle of the mountain, at a short distance from the narrow path.—Each penitent takes a seat in this chair, and is turned in it thrice, by a person who acts as superintendant of this part of the ceremony, and receives, from each, a penny for his trouble. He resides in the County of Mayo, whence he comes every year: and like most of the peasantry of that part of the country, speaks the purest dialect of the ancient Irish. He boasts of the office having been in his family ever since the days of Saint Patrick; and accordingly is well versed in all the legends of the place, which he takes great pleasure in communicating to strangers.

When this part of the ceremony is ended, the penitents descend into the plain, where they move round certain cairns of stones; some crawling, and others running, as before. Each individual, however, must here carry a stone, which he adds to the heap. These cairns are in groups of seven and twelve, which respectively denote the days of the week, and the months of the year; or, as some will have it, the 7 churches and the 12 apostles. Around these they go 7 times, or 7 times 7; and 12 times, or 12 times 12; measured as before by their various degrees of criminality. An accurate observer, from the quantity of mortifications, would soon be able to calculate the amount of guilt which each penitent endeavours to expiate.

The next part of the ceremony is to proceed to the large well, termed the body well, or by some the well of sins. Be-

fore entering it, however, they approach with profound reverence a flag of freestone, which is placed in the wall, and is possessed of some peculiarly sanctifying powers. This they touch with their fingers, and then cross themselves repeatedly. They are now prepared for the purifications of the holy wells.

If they can afford a few pence of admission money, they may enter the larger well, where they have a room to undress: if not, they must content themselves with the second or limb well, into which they are admitted, free of expense; being obliged, however, to strip themselves in the adjoining fields. All modesty is here thrown aside. As they approach the well, they throw off even their under-garments; and with more than Lacedemonian indifference, before the assembled multitudes, they go forward in a state of absolute nudity, plunge in, and bathe promiscuously, until

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*Infectum eluitur scelus.*” •        “*Sub gurgite vasto*

After such an immersion, they go through the ceremony of washing their eyes, that they may hereafter see the right path; and conclude the whole by drinking from the fourth well, called by some the well of forgetfulness, and by others the water of life. According to the former account, it has an affinity to the ancient Lethe, and is used for similar purposes:

*Securos latices, et longa oblivia, potant.*†

But the oblivion produced by this water is much more extensive and complete: extending not only over the *recollections* of those who drink it, but over all the *sins* they have committed.

Thus end the ceremonies of the day.—Those of the evening follow; and form a remarkable contrast. The employments of the day are the labours of virtue, those of the evening are her rewards, by which the former are amply compensated. Their eyes, after being bathed in the sacred stream, instantly discover the flowery path of pleasure, which conducts them to the tents prepared for their reception, where they are supplied with copious draughts, of which the water of life was but a faint emblem. In these tents, and in the adjoining fields under the canopy of the calm sky, they spend the whole night, quaffing the soul-inspiring beverage, and indulging in various gratifications, to which the time and place are favourable; for it is understood that while the jubilee continues, and as long as the happy multitudes remain on the sacred ground, they cannot contract new guilt!

\* The stain of guilt is washed out in the large pool.

† They drink the oblivious waters, and long forgetfulness.

All, however, are not thus engaged. Among those who lie all night exposed without the shelter of the tent, are to be seen several groups of men, with shaven crowns and of ostentatiously sanctified demeanour. These are Lay-friars of the order of Mount Carmel. They trace their origin to Elijah, and say that Elisha was the institutor of their tonsure ; but they boast also of being descended from the moderate brethren who opposed the austerities and innovations which the Lady Theresa attempted to introduce. These groups are generally scattered over the hill ; and are surrounded by a few women and children ; while they frequently interrupt the monotonous hum that pervades the place, by chanting and singing hymns in honour of the Saint and the Virgin.

But the miraculous powers of Struile are not confined to spiritual defects : they extend to those of the body also. In imitation of the pool of Siloam, at a certain season the waters are troubled by an angel. At the midnight hour, precisely at the point of time which separates midsummer eve from midsummer day, when all is silence, and all expectation, the channel that forms the communication between the wells, becomes insufficient to contain the increasing stream ; and its waters burst forth, overflowing the entire plain ! If you wish to be cured, presume not to suspect that it is a human angel who performs this wonderful work ; or for a moment imagine that the river has been dammed above. If you attempt to account for the sudden overflow by any method or process that is level to human comprehension, you destroy at once the efficacy of the stream for yourself, and for all who may be infected with your presumptuous doubts.

To this pool many resort from the remotest corners of Ireland, in the fullest hopes of having their bodily infirmities removed. The blind, the lame and the maimed, and those afflicted with divers immedicable diseases, spend many a weary day in travelling to this wonder-working fountain. At all times, much benefit is to be obtained from the different wells, towards removing the various complaints for which they are respectively adapted ;—the limb-well, for sores and lameness ; the eye-well, for diseased and destroyed vision ; and the drinking-well, for internal derangements of the system. But at this important season, when the angel troubles the waters, whosoever is first immersed in the overflowing pool, is infallibly cured, whatever the disease may be with which he has been afflicted. The most incontestable evidence of the fact is produced on such occasions by those who are cured. Thus in the year when I visited the wells, a blind man had his sight restored at the overflowing of the pool. In the morning



crowds flocked about him, to hear of his experience. No sinister object could have tempted him to impose upon their credulity. Every one indeed gave the poor man money to begin his new life ; but the prospect of this could have had no influence over him ; nor was it possible that any one could have before bribed him to keep up the sanctity of the place. He began by asserting that on the preceding day he had been blind ; and for the truth of which statement he referred to two witnesses, who had not only, as they expressed it, seen his blindness, by his not being able to tell what number of fingers they held before him, but had actually been obliged to lead him out of Downpatrick to Struile. Secondly, he brought a witness to prove that with his assistance he had got into the pool precisely at the time of overflowing. " And now, gentlemen," said this new-eyed man, " of the third point you can all judge for yourselves :—I can tell you how each of you is dressed, and what kind of coins you lay before me. Do, indeed—try me with your coins !" Such is the plain, solid, matter-of-fact reasoning, that carries conviction to every mind.

Concerning the institution of these important and salutary ceremonies, history is silent. Some of them are evidently of Christian origin ; while others have a resemblance to Pagan customs, many of which were early adopted as improvements in the practices of the church.—The precise period when Struile acquired its wonderful qualities, is not found in any written record, nor on any coin, or any inscription. But the Connaught peasant, who presided over the ceremonies of the chair, supplied this blank in history, by the following most satisfactory account of their origin.

Our renowned Saint, after his arrival in this part of Ireland, was endeavouring to convert an old worthy of the tribe of MacDhu. One day, as they were walking through the plain now called Struile, on the way from Ardglass, the chieftain's residence, to the monastery of Saul, MacDhu was so powerfully moved by Saint Patrick's arguments in favour of Christianity, that he at length consented that he himself, and all his followers should be baptized, if the Saint could at that moment miraculously procure a supply of water. No river passed then through these places. Saint Patrick immediately struck him upon the foot with a white rod which he usually carried. This bound him firmly to the spot where he stood. At length, however, the rod being lifted up, he walked forward ; but a stream of blood flowed from his foot. The blood, after running a short distance, was changed by the Saint's command, into a stream of water, which has never since ceased to flow. The chieftain, and all his followers,

professed their faith in Christianity, and were baptized. The water that had been blood, became possessed of purifying powers: but as all diseases are evils entailed upon us on account of some sins, it follows, that if those sins can be washed off, the diseases themselves must vanish. Hence, also, the healing powers of those wells.—The plain and mountain, together with a considerable tract of the adjoining country, were given up by MacDhu, for the use of the brethren of Saul, and consecrated by the Saint as holy ground. The whole tract of land was named from the river Struile, being a corrupted compound of two Irish words, *struth fuile* or *folá*, signifying *a stream of blood*. VIATOR.

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REVIEW  
OF  
BISHOP MANT'S CHARGE.

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*Some Particulars in the Ministerial Character and Obligations, examined and enforced, in a CHARGE delivered to the Clergy of the Dioceses of Down and Connor, at the Primary Visitation at Lisburn, Wednesday, July the 28th, 1824. By RICHARD MANT, D.D. M.R.I.A. Bishop of Down and Connor.—1824.*

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THANKS to the learned and respectable Bishop of Down and Connor, for this truly apostolical charge; and thanks to him, also, for introducing us into the society of his illustrious predecessor, Jeremy Taylor, to whom he thus refers, in the very commencement. "His genius and learning, his benevolence and piety, reflect after the lapse of a century and a half, and will long continue to reflect, honour on the See which I now with much unworthiness occupy; and his renown, in the absence of every monument, save the perennial memorial of his works, is cherished, I am persuaded, in the minds of all of you, with a sort of hereditary affection."—We have perused this interesting Discourse, with a sentiment of unmingled approbation; and we congratulate the Clergy of the Diocese of Down and Connor, on having obtained a man of so much talent, and learning, and Christian zeal, to preside over them in spiritual things. He stands pre-eminent among the Irish Prelates of the present day, and we hope that his example may be useful, not to his own Presbyters